

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9202

INFO AMCONSUL BELIZE

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 6623

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, PFOR, UK, BH, GT

SUBJECT: BELIZE NEGOTIATIONS

1. THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR SPOKE LAST NIGHT WITH E.N. LARMOUR, DEPUTY UNDERSECRETARY OF THE BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE, WHO IS IN PANAMA FOR THE BELIZE NEGOTIATIONS. MR. LARMOUR REPORTED THAT THE NEGOTIATORS MADE "SOME PROGRESS" IN THE DEFENSE AND ECONOMIC-FINANCIAL AREAS. HE SAID THAT THE BRITISH NEGOTIATORS DID NOT COME TO PANAMA PREPARED TO DISCUSS TERRITORIAL QUESTIONS, BUT HE DID NOT SAY WHETHER GUATEMALA HAD SOUGHT TO INTRODUCE THAT MATTER.

2. AMONG THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE TWO-DAY NEGOTIATIONS (SEPTEMBER 21-22), LARMOUR SAID, WERE TENTATIVE AGREEMENT ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A JOINT DEFENSE COUNCIL, WHEREIN THE PARTIES WOULD HOLD REGULAR CONSULTATIONS AND A JOINT FOREIGN AFFAIRS CONSULTATIVE GROUP.

3. LARMOUR SAID THAT THE BRITISH NEGOTIATORS HAD DRAFTED AN ARTICLE, WHICH HAD THE AGREEMENT OF THE BELIZE DELEGATION, WHEREBY BELIZE AGREED NOT TO ESTABLISH DEFENSE

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ARRANGEMENTS WITH COUNTRIES WHICH WERE NOT EITHER OAS

OR COMMONWEALTH MEMBERS IN GOOD STANDING (THEREBY EXCLUDING A MILITARY TIE WITH CUBA). BUT THE GUATEMALANS, TO THE SURPRISE OF THE BRITISH, ALSO WANTED TO EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF DEFENSE TIES WITH GUYANA, JAMAICA AND MEXICO. LARMOUR SAID THAT HE DID NOT SEE HOW BRITAIN AND BELIZE COULD ACCEPT ANYTHING ALONG THESE LINES.

4. LARMOUR SAID THERE WAS SOMETHING OF A STANDOFF ON THE QUESTION OF A FREE TRADE AREA TO INCLUDE GUATEMALA AND BELIZE. HE SAID THE GUATEMALANS RECOGNIZED THAT SUCH A FREE TRADE AREA WOULD BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO ESTABLISH, BECAUSE OF GUATEMALA'S MEMBERSHIP IN THE CENTRAL AMERICAN COMMON MARKET AND BELIZE'S ASSOCIATION WITH CARICOM. THE GUATEMALANS WOULD LIKE THE TREATY TO STATE THAT THE PARTIES WILL MAKE A "BEST EFFORT" TO ESTABLISH A FREE TRADE AREA.

5. LARMOUR SAID THAT THE MOST ENCOURAGING THING IN THE NEGOTIATIONS SO FAR IS GUATEMALA'S AGREEMENT TO RECOGNIZE THE EXISTENCE OF BELIZE. BUT, HE SAID, THE REAL DIFFICULTY WILL COME WHEN THE NEGOTIATIONS GET DOWN TO THE QUESTION OF BOUNDARIES. "THEY ARE PREPARED TO RECOGNIZE BELIZE, BUT WILL IT BE A BELIZE THAT THE BELIZEANS WILL ACCEPT?" HE DOUBTED THAT CESSION OF TERRITORY BY BELIZE IS NOW A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE, AS IT MAY HAVE BEEN A YEAR OR TWO AGO.

6. LARMOUR INDICATED THAT THE TALKS HAD BEEN FRUITFUL AND FRIENDLY. BOTH MOLINA AND PRICE SEEMED REASONABLY PLEASED WITH THE PANAMA SESSION. BUT THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR'S IMPRESSION WAS THAT LARMOUR WAS NOT OPTIMISTIC THAT A MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY TREATY CAN BE SIGNED BECAUSE OF INCOMPATIBLE POSITIONS ON CESSION OF TERRITORY. "WE ARE TALKING," HE SAID. "THAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING. I THINK THAT THE GUATEMALANS ARE PLEASED ENOUGH WITH THE WAY THINGS ARE NOW. AND I THINK YOU AMERICANS MUST FEEL THE SAME WAY."

7. LARMOUR SAID HE EXPECTS THE TALKS TO RESUME IN LATE
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OCTOBER OR EARLY NOVEMBER, PROBABLY IN EUROPE.
JORDEN

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